

# FOCH, FORESEEING WAR, VARNED FRANCE FOR YEARS TO PREPARE TO FIGHT

## FIRST WON FAME IN MARNE BATTLE

Foch Little Known Except Among Military Men Until That Victory.

CLOSE TO HIS SOLDIERS

As Director of Ecole de Guerre Did Much to Make Army Efficient.

When all Europe was in a state of peace that now seems a sort of dream day of another world there was one high officer of France, Gen. Ferdinand Foch, who day in and day out steadily repeated the word "Prepare." Although the French public but vaguely knew his name, scarcely knew him when the Germans were spilling across Belgium and onto French soil, the army officers of France knew him then and had known him and his work for years, but chiefly because they were of his own profession.

But as he steadily drilled his single motto, "Prepare," there were countless military men in France, even officers, who went the test case, proved their mettle, who looked upon Gen. Foch and his eternal preaching of preparedness for a conflict which he never doubted was inevitable quite as a big crowd of Americans, even American army men, looked upon Major-Gen. Leonard Wood, the late Augustus Gardner and similar Americans of vision when they were preaching their lonely doctrine of preparedness years ago.

**Army Men His Audience.**  
All through the peaceful years that Gen. Foch presided in his spoken belief that the great war was coming he was hammering his doctrine of preparedness for the fight into the army of officers who were to be the leaders of the people as the leading American spokesmen of preparedness were doing. And so the name and characteristics of even Representative Augustus Gardner were better known to Americans than the personality of Foch was known in France.

Army officers who had attended his lectures on strategy and tactics in the Ecole de Guerre were prone to look upon him—much as they respected his sternness—as a great, rugged, old-fashioned, a mathematician of a very high order, a philosopher, a man or rare physical grace and, despite a certain austerity of manner, of much personal charm, and a man who could not only instruct but also inspire. But in spite of the admiration which French army men had for the high attainments of their teachers, the opinion was held not uncommonly among French military leaders that Foch was first and last a theorist, whose place was the lecture hall, not the field.

And then came the war. That Foch had expected quite as confidently as had the biggest bullock in Prussian autocracy, Foch, so it has been said authoritatively, was the least surprised man in the world when the German army came into France and over the eastern frontier of France the Kaiser's great army fighting came charging along pell-mell.

And straightaway the French military men who thought they knew all about Foch learned almost in a day that they had known nothing about him at all.

**Practises His Theories.**  
On to the field he went, still a philosopher, teacher, writer, theorist, and instantly he began to put into practical application all the theories of his life's teachings and theories he had been hammering into his military students for many years. Suddenly France awoke to the fact that the man who had been known to one or two very great captains of his splendid military history.

He had begun his practical lessons when just passing out of his teens, fighting in the field, and he had been known as a subaltern, just as now, in his sixty-seventh year, he is rounding out a great career in a blaze of glory as a grand commander of all the forces of the civilized world against German hordes. He "stopped them at the Marne," quite as much as the magnificent Joffre, did more to stop them than even the mighty Joffre, according to many high military authorities. And regarding the comparative merits of the services rendered to France and civilization by these two French immortals the fact stands out that of the two men Foch not only was continued high in the command in the field after the Marne, but repeated his triumphs at Verdun and has steadily gone on and upward until today he holds the highest place among all the great soldiers fighting in the world for decency and democracy.

There was a staff dinner one night in 1913 at Nancy when Foch was commander of the Twentieth French Army Corps. Gen. Foch, even in those peaceful days, went in for dinners or other social affairs, entertaining himself with attending only to obligatory social duties, but no more. But as commander of the corps he was of course in a place of honor at the dinner and he was speaking informally to the officers, grouped about him that night he said: "First find out your enemy's weak point and concentrate your blows on it. It is a commonplace of tactics which is self-evident."

**Must Make Weak Point.**  
"But, General," broke in an officer of artillery, "suppose your enemy has no weak point? That sometimes happens."

"Certainly," replied Gen. Foch. "And in that case the next step also is a commonplace of tactics. You make a weak point."

And again and again he would quote Joseph de Maistre's aphorism, "A battle is lost to a battle which one believes to have lost, for battles are not lost materially." And he would add, "Battles are therefore lost morally, and it is therefore morally that they are won."

Despite the fact that Foch was born with a brain which in early life bent its greatest activities toward higher mathematics, he refused to be bound by the abstruse laws of exact science once he takes the field. It may be said that even refuses to countenance the science of warfare as a science, persistently sticks to the "rules" as he calls them, and that is the way he has been practicing his knowledge of warfare ever since the first gun of 1914 was fired.



Gen. Ferdinand Foch.

In the end, keeping at it until he was able to profit by the mistake of inferior generals arrayed against him, who finally were outfought at the decisive moment by Gen. Foch and defeated. His little as he was known in France, even his name was unheard of, among the general English public, even after King George had visited the battle lines in France and had conferred upon two Frenchmen, Foch and Joffre, the greatest military order it is possible for the British Crown to confer.

And beyond the fact that a few Englishmen remembered the name of Gen. Ferdinand Foch was at the head of the French military mission which followed the war began, the public generally could not answer. But Gen. Kitchener, and especially Gen. French, who long has been a friend of Gen. Foch, knew of his great worth, and it is doubtless because of their intimate knowledge of his great ability that the British Crown was induced to place Foch alongside with Joffre in giving out its highest military order in France.

**Ability Praised by Germans.**  
And, of course, the Germans knew of him, even before he had proved his abilities by turning them at the Marne. Foch's two remarkable books on the science of warfare, "Principles of War" and "The Conduct of War," years ago had been translated into German, and they later were translated also into English and Italian. And the *Militarische Wochenschrift*, which is the official organ of the German General Staff, even had been gracious enough to place Gen. Foch as "one of the few strategists of the first class among the Entente Allies."

Clemenceau was Premier of France when Foch was selected for the enviable position, long before the great war began, of Director of the Ecole de Guerre. Unnumbered French general officers of high family and social connections were seeking the place. The wires were pulled so hard and the entanglements became so complex that Clemenceau suddenly cast all the schemers aside and decided to pick a dark horse of his own choosing.

Whereupon the French Premier one day invited the unsuspecting Gen. Foch, who had not been so much mentioned among the candidates and never had had the vaguest hope that his name would be considered even for a moment, to call one day for a routine conference. At the close of the perfunctory talk Clemenceau suddenly invited Gen. Foch to luncheon with him.

"Oh, by the way, General," remarked the Premier lightly over the coffee and cigars, "I have a bit of news for you. It may interest you to learn that you are nominated Director of the Ecole de Guerre."

**Brother a Jesuit Priest.**  
"I," exclaimed the astounded General. "Why, I am not even a candidate. It is impossible. And besides I fear you do not know about my family. What would the politicians say if they were to learn that the Director of the Ecole de Guerre is of a religious family, to whom the Church is of tremendous importance? You may not know, but my brother is a Jesuit. Think of it, a Jesuit priest!"

"That be damned!" is the reply attributed to the brusque French Premier. "All the Jesuits in the world could not alter the fact that you are to be the Director of the Ecole de Guerre!" And thereupon for five years Gen. Foch, as head of France's great school of war, rendered services as a military teacher which went far toward turning out the unparalleled army which for almost four years has been putting up the magnificent fight of history. He brought about a general shakeup in the whole scheme of French tactics, and short as his headship of the war school lasted he is credited with doing for the military section of the new France all and more than Ernest Lavisse has done for the academic section of the world of civil and industrial and political life.

**Born Near Joffre's Birthplace.**

Lake Gen. Joffre, Gen. Foch was born in the south of France. In fact, both were born a few miles from each other within less than four months. Gen. Foch is the descendant of an ancient Basque family, which for many generations has been in the Department of the Hautes-Pyrenees, on the Spanish border. The General was born October 2, 1851, in the town of Tarbes. His father, Napoleon Foch, was a Bonapartist and secretary of the prefecture at Tarbes under Napoleon III. There also were born Gen. Foch's brothers. One of them, a lawyer, and the other brother is still a priest in the Society of Jesus. The General and his brothers attended a small college in Tarbes and then left home to take up their respective military, legal and religious studies. After his service as a subaltern—like Joffre—Gen. Foch would as steadily start the day by taking the offensive.

## FOCH IS PICKED AS LEADER OF ALLIES

Continued From First Page.

thoritatively that President Wilson had been officially informed of it yesterday. It was the expectation here that formal announcement of the appointment would be made to-day in London and Paris. No word has reached here that such announcement has been made.

Gen. Foch's appointment was generally hailed here and particularly by military men not only as a decision of supreme importance to the allied cause but also as bringing ultimate victory appreciably nearer. Col. E. M. House, who was at the White House to-day and who attended the first interallied war council, while declining to discuss the effect of the appointment said: "I know Gen. Foch very well and like him very much. He is a splendid soldier."

**Foch's Selection Expected.**  
Gen. Foch, military men point out, has a record which has all along gone hand in hand with the British victory. He was largely responsible for the victory in the Marne, which saved Paris in 1914, and his brilliant and masterful strategy helped the situation during the German attacks later. It was expected that Foch, whose intrepid spirit carried the French forward in the Somme offensive.

Because of the fact that Gen. Foch has been recognized as a military genius in France, it has been assumed that he would be placed in supreme command of the interallied forces certainly that if the plan were agreed upon that the Allies were ready to follow President Wilson's suggestion for unity of command.

Advices here indicate that the French have been strongly in favor of a supreme commander since last fall. He sent Col. House to the first interallied war conference in November with instructions to press this point. The French favored the plan and Premier Lloyd George of Great Britain endorsed it, but there was a strong adverse sentiment in the British Parliament.

As a result the matter was held in abeyance, but was taken up again by the Supreme War Council at Versailles a few weeks ago. It was understood at that time that if the decision had been reached to place the supreme command in the hands of one man, but no definite announcement was forthcoming.

Following his five years as head of the war college he was placed in command of the Thirteenth Division of the French army. Next he commanded the Eighth Corps at Bourges, and from this command he was placed at the head of the Twentieth Corps at Nancy.

When the great conflict between his own country and Germany finally began in August, 1914, Gen. Foch was in the Lorraine district. Then when the Germans had ravished Belgium and were tearing down upon Paris he was hurried from his post to stand side by side with Joffre in the great counter attack which culminated at the Marne.

And on September 9, 1914, it was Gen. Foch, who, reasoning that there must be some sort of gap between the Prussian Guard and the Saxon army, "found the enemy's weak point. He promptly assembled a sufficient quantity of artillery to smash the Guard in the marshes of St. Gond, separated Saxon from Prussian and so forced the Germans to fall back."

Again he was in general command at Ypres, fortunately, when once more the Germans made a great onslaught. At the head of the British and Belgian as well as the French forces which met that onslaught Gen. Foch again outfought and outgeneraled the Germans. And once more he stopped their drive toward Paris and the English Channel.

**Close to Soldiers' Hearts.**  
By this time he was hailed, even by the greatest of military experts, as one of the foremost military geniuses of the whole war. He had become known now as a man who could not only put his studies with a thorough study also of the campaigns of Caesar. And throughout his career he never has forgotten that it is the "man behind the gun" who must be the decisive factor in the battle, no matter how great is the generalship displayed.

He is credited with being nearer the hearts of his fighting men and with knowing more of their thought, their desires, their most insignificant longings, than any man in France. And although he never permits his familiarity that would endanger discipline he has learned to know the heart of the French soldier by mingling with them in the trenches, talking to them at first hand, being of them but always above them.

**COMMISSION FOR TAFT'S SON.**  
His Promotion to Be Army Officer Is Recommended.

By the Associated Press.  
WITH THE AMERICAN ARMY IN FRANCE, March 29.—Sergeant Major Charles H. Taft, son of former President William H. Taft, has been recommended through the regular military channels for promotion to a commissioned officer.

Sergeant Major Taft, who has been at the front for some time, is said to have proved himself an efficient non-commissioned officer and to have qualifications for a commission.

**SIR GEORGE SMITH COMING.**

Head of Aberdeen University Will Lecture Here.

A cablegram received yesterday by Henry George Morrison, secretary of the National Committee on Churches and the Moral Aims of the War, from Ambassador Page in London, announces that Sir George Smith, head of Aberdeen University in Scotland, will reach this country in a few days. He will speak on April 4 at the Interchurch Clerical Conference, which is being held at the suggestion of the national committee and the Liberty Loan committee.

Sir George comes as the accredited representative of the department of the formation of the British Foreign Office. After his appearance here he will make a lecture tour of the country under the auspices of the national committee.

**Two Indicted as Wheat Hoarders.**  
LINCOLN, Neb., March 29.—Federal indictments were returned by a Federal grand jury here to-day against Neils Merryman, Astell, Neb., and Louis Pellot, Beatrice, Neb., charging violation of the Government's food law by holding wheat. Merryman is alleged to have held 25,000 bushels of grain, 1,250 bushels of which was allowed to spoil.

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Just as at Verdun, where the weight of the enemy attack had to be exerted further and further away from his objective, so in the present battle the Germans, in their attempt to break through the junction point of the British and French armies, find the French troops meeting their efforts further and further westward.

The Germans, having failed completely at Soyon to capture the British and French armies, attacked further west and sought to find at Montdidier the weak point of the junction, but again they found that the French left flank had been extended.

**Sought to Cut Off Amiens.**  
This attack in the Montdidier direction was, as the military experts point out, doubtless a part of the plan for cutting off Amiens on the south and thus breaking the continuity of the British and French lines. The French troops north and south of the Oise and on the Montdidier road fought with the greatest stubbornness. The whole struggle in this part of the French battlefield is officially described as being of a hitherto unknown ferocity.

Every fresh development of events on the battle front is now being given in the clearest German hope first of all to cut off the British from the French army and then, with a great rolling up movement, to capture the British and French lines. The French troops north and south of the Ypres salient again to Boulogne, thus backing a new road to Calais and the Channel ports.

The French have rooted firmly in their minds the fact that in their great hour of peril on the Marne their strategy completely got the better of the enemy. French confidence, which without being inspired by optimism or ignorance, nevertheless sturdy, lies in the growing knowledge of the fact that in a few days the German offensive has settled the question of coordination and the allied high command, which months of discussion between the Governments and Generals has not managed hitherto to achieve.

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## WARNS GERMANS TO 'KEEP THEIR HEADS'

Teuton Press Contains Advice to People Not to Be Over-confident.

VON LUDENDORFF JOINS

Annexionists Begin Agitation for Colossal Indemnities From Allies.

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